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Soviets on the move

as Congress balks

GRIM White House staffers took note with bitter irony of the delivery of new Soviet arms to Nicaragua, in the wake of the decision by Congress to spurn President Reagan's \$14 million aid request for the Nicaraguan democratic forces.

Intelligence reports reaching the White House revealed that during the exact time the House was debating Reagan's aid request to the rebels Wednesday, the Soviet freighter Novo Moskovsk arrived in the Nicaraguan port of Corinto.

And in the time it took for the congressional debate, these reports say, the Soviets unloaded at least two new MI8-17 Hip helicopters used as both gunships and troop carriers, along with rifles, other small arms, ammunition and other equipment that has yet to be identified.

A quick analysis by the Pentagon revealed that the total value of the arms cache exceeded the \$14 million aid request for the rebels.

Insiders say that the intelligence information gathered through spy satellites and other "assets," arrived too late to do any good in the congressional debate.

"This really is quite ironic. And all it has done is just added to our outrage at Congress," said a senior administration official.

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THE uproar over the planned ceremony at the German military cemetery at Bitburg is not the only potential flash point facing President Reagan as he prepares to leave for Europe tomorrow.

Senior Reagan administration foreign policy advisers say they are deeply concerned that all the fumbling and ill will created by the Bitburg controversy could spill into other areas of major importance to the NATO alliance.

The advisers fear problems in Reagan's efforts to gain support in Europe for his

Star Wars defense research plan.

During confidential negotiations in advance of this week's seven-nation economic summit, U.S. diplomats were trying to persuade U.S. allies to sign a joint statement of support for the Star Wars research.

The idea was that such a statement would give the U.S. added leverage in its bargaining position with the Soviet Union in time for the start of the second round of arms-control talks with the Soviets in Geneva.

But sources say that although many participants in the summit, including British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, have expressed support for Star Wars, the othersix nations participating in the summit refused to go along with putting that pledge on paper in a joint statement.

One reason given for the refusal was that West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl wanted to limit the number of joint communiques signed at the summit to just two — the first on economic issues and the second on reconciliation among the Allies to coincide with the 40th anniversary of V-E Day.

A senior State Dept. official said the administration is "disappointed" with the failure to get the Star Wars communique and noted that it is "just too early" in the process for such a move.

What is of major concern, however, is that the summit leaders have scheduled dis-

cussions about Star Wars during summit plenary sessions this week.

And in the current climate of bitterness and tension surrounding the Bitburg visit and the trade war between the U.S. and Japan, U.S. officials fear that any ill feelings by the Allies could be directed at Reagan's Star Wars plan — which would give the Soviets a new opening to launch a propaganda offensive instead of talking turkey in Geneva.

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WHITE House Chief of Staff Donald Regan apparently has joined the ranks of influential officials in government who want to see Vice President George Bush win the GOP nomination in 1988.

White House insiders say that Regan, since becoming chief of staff, has formed an alliance with Bush.

The evidence of this, say officials, is that Bush is being consulted on most key issues

that come across Regan's desk.

And in a structure where access is power, officials say that Bush has been invited by Regan to sit in on all morning meetings with President Reagan.

Bush and Regan and National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, it now appears, are the only people with direct access to the President on a daily basis — a dramatic contrast to the less-formal staff structure during the first Reagan term, when at least six aides had direct access to the Oval Office.

Other senior White House and Reagan administration officials expected to back Bush in 1988 include White House political director and former Reagan campaign manager Ed Rollins, politically astute Treasury Secretary and former White House Chief of Staff James Baker, as well as scores of former aides in the 1980 and 1984 Reagan campaigns.